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Empowering Our Ministry: The Spiritual Gift of Giving

Romans 12:3-8

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This morning I'd like to talk about the spiritual gift of giving. Found in the list of spiritual gifts in Romans 12, giving has the sense of 'to give a share of your resources' so that the body of Christ might be built up. Commentaries tend to place a strong emphasis on the giving of money, but a study of the word places an emphasis on the giver rather than the type of gift.

Now, we are all expected to return our lives to God as a response of gratitude to the salvation we receive from Christ's work on the cross. So, there is the generalized sense that we are all to be givers. It's not just those who have the spiritual gift of giving who are to give. But some have been specially blessed with this particular spiritual gift, and it's our job to figure out how the spiritual gift of giving differs from the everyday thankful giving of our lives.

Let's look at the story of the Good Samaritan for a moment. Here we see a man who stopped by the road to help someone in need. He didn't have to stop but he did. Why? Because he saw a need which he had the capacity to meet. He left his donkey and his stuff for a moment and attended to the injured person. He most likely got dirty, and maybe got some blood on his clothing. His care for the injured person slowed him down, delayed his getting to his goal for that day. He took the man to an inn and paid for his care, and arranged for future care.

Other than his actions, all it says in Luke about the Good Samaritan is that he had compassion for the injured man left half-dead by robbers. What we see is that he gave and gave and gave. He appeared to have no concern whatsoever for his own issues - he simply and generously gave of himself, of whatever resources he had at his disposal, to meet the needs of the other.

The spiritual gift of giving works like this is the person so gifted. The person with this spiritual gift sees a specific need and gives with simplicity and with generosity. This kind of giving is different because it has no other motive other than the giving. There is no sense of obligation or duty, no sense that this gift may impoverish you. As a matter of fact, those with the spiritual gift of giving take so much delight in giving that they often think they haven't done anything worth much. Their resources are of so little real import to them and there is such joy in the giving, that is, they receive so much in the giving, that the notion that someone else benefits from their gift is only icing on the cake.

I'm not saying someone with the spiritual gift of giving is selfish and only gives for the expected joy of giving, but that the person has the maturity to understand they have been given, by God, resources which are for the giving. They understand intuitively the principle, so hard for many of us, that giving is by definition an exercise of liberality. And when they give, they feel fulfilled, and then, as with all spiritual gifts, their giving is fruitful, effective in meeting a specific need that builds up some member of the body of Christ, and enables that member to refocus on God and get back to using their spiritual gift.

I know a few people with the spiritual gift of giving in our church community. When people comment on how much and how effectively they give, these people shrug their shoulders and make light of whatever it is they are said to have done. They don't make light of the people who are speaking to them, they just don't think that what they may have given is all that important in the larger scheme of things. What they don't yet see, perhaps, is that they have a spiritual gift called giving. They have been given many personal resources like time or talent, and they give selflessly, completely, liberally, with generosity, without any ulterior motive.

Of course, I have been suggesting that whenever you are using the spiritual gift that is given to you, whatever it is, you also will not see it as any kind of burden. When we use our spiritual gift, we feel fulfilled, and we will be fruitful, so in that arena, we will also act without ulterior motive. But those with the spiritual gift of giving are specially endowed with personal resources which God intends to flow out from them into the lives of other people.

And some of those with the spiritual gift of giving are granted, by God, the minds and the talent to make a lot of money. Essentially, God blesses them with lots of money so that they will funnel lots of money back into God's work. They are the ones who give large percentages of their real income, quietly, without fanfare, with the effect of powerfully supporting the ministry of the body of Christ. Obviously, the church needs people like this, though I don't want you to think the financial component of giving is the central ingredient in the spiritual gift of giving.

Do you have the spiritual gift of giving? Do you have resources of any kind which you are able to contribute cheerfully and generously to God's work? Do you take incredible joy in giving, without concern for how it impacts you? Has God blessed you with many resources? Do you give and then wonder why anyone would make a fuss over your gift? If you can answer YES to these questions, you may well be one of those with the spiritual gift of giving. If so, we need you!

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